

Compensation Committee
Block 7, 2014 Meeting Minutes
Thursday March 27, 2014

We discussed the following topics:

1. Consideration of sick leave accrual and use policy for staff together with long term disability insurance- follow on from Block 5 meeting.

Barbara looked up some statistics about usage of sick leave. 95% of the 214 hourly/non-exempt staff took at least one sick day in the past year. There are 240 exempt staff. Since there is no accounting of sick days it is unknown how many took sick days. 13 of the exempt staff used extended medical leave, which includes those using it for parental leave.

Robert looked into this topic some more and found that there isn't really any norm or usual practice for which policies and how much is paid by the employer for short and long term disability. Given this situation, and the magnitude of the change recommended by this committee at our block 5 meeting, he and Barbara feel more input is necessary before making such large changes. They will hold focus groups over the summer to gather this input, particularly with exempt staff since their policy would change the most.

2. Start-up funds for faculty

We preface this section with the clear statement that start-up funds are peripheral to the main focus of the work of this committee since they are neither compensation nor benefits, but rather are a one-time offering of funds from the college to a new faculty member to start his/her research program upon hiring. They are typically used for equipment, including computers, supplies, access to databases, and other research expenses, but never for faculty salaries or benefits. This topic is related to our committee's work only because start-up funds are part of a hiring package, which includes of course compensation and benefits, for new faculty hires, and start-up funds are one of the ways that Colorado College competes to hire the best faculty possible.

To provide baseline data on this issue, Lyrae Williams and paraprofs in the president's office did a survey of start-up funding and policies at our 17 peer institutions. They surveyed the 435 Assistant Professors at those institutions in the following fields: anthropology, art, biology, chemistry, computer science, economics, geology, math, physics, and psychology. They received 148 completed responses for a 34% response rate. The survey instrument is included at the end of this document. The primary result of this survey, a table of start-up funds disaggregated by discipline is also included at the end of this document. This table may be useful for department chairs as they hire in those departments. The dataset also includes a wealth of information about policies governing start-up funds at these schools.

The compensation committee discussed the issue of start-up funds with this data in hand. However, upon doing so, it became clear that this is not the appropriate group to provide a complete set of recommendations on this issue. Rather, what is needed is a more focused group of faculty, preferably involving a number of junior faculty, to discuss this further and offer substantive recommendations not only on amounts of start-up funds, but also on policies governing start-up funds. So our primary recommendation is that this issue be taken up by another more appropriate committee- perhaps the

Dean's Advisory Committee or the (to be established) External Grants Advisory Committee- who can fully utilize the extensive dataset to generate recommendations regarding start-up funds at CC.

Previous paragraphs of dissembling notwithstanding, the compensation committee did generate several thoughts regarding start-up funds that we share here. Looking at the table of start-up funds and comparing them to start-up funds offered over the last five years at CC (data not included here due to privacy concerns) it is clear that

1. CC's mean start-up packages are lower than those at our 17 peer schools, comprising between 50-80% of the mean start-up packages at those 17 peer schools depending on the field.
2. The high end of start-up funds at our peer schools by far exceed anything that CC has offered, or would probably be prepared to offer, meaning if a good candidate presented with start-up needs equivalent to the high packages at our comparable schools, we would be entirely unable to effectively compete for that candidate on start-up funds. This led to the idea that a start-up reserve fund may be needed, in addition to a regular line-item, to accommodate such a candidate.

3. Differential salaries by field for faculty

President Tiefenthaler asked the chair of the committee to discuss the issue of whether CC should have differential salaries, particularly at hire, in different fields. At our block 7 meeting, the faculty members of the compensation committee discussed this topic. There were four (of five total on the committee) faculty members present during this discussion.

Three of the four faculty members were opposed to differential salaries under any circumstances, with the primary concern being the cost to morale of a non-egalitarian salary structure. The consensus among those faculty was that equal salaries between fields says something about our community valuing everyone's contributions equally. There were also concerns that high salaries in certain fields might not yield faculty sufficiently devoted to undergraduate teaching. The fourth faculty member sees the validity of these concerns, but felt that the reality is that the market dictates salaries being higher in some fields, and to offer competitive salaries may be necessary to ensure quality candidates in those fields. By looking back at recent hires in fields so affected, it may be possible to determine whether this is the case.

In the face of these thoughts, the chair of the committee posed a thought experiment: suppose we could prove that some departments cannot hire the quality of candidates that we expect at CC given a salary constrained by having equal salaries between fields. Are you in this case still opposed to offering a higher salary to candidates in this field? Three of the four faculty members in attendance replied affirmatively, with one of those replying that it would be preferable to eliminate those fields from our hires rather than have differential salaries. The fourth faculty member replied negatively, feeling that in this case differential salaries would be necessary.

Respectfully submitted by Kristine Lang